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* CHAPTER V *
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* OFFICIANTS OF ŚRAUTA RITUALS *
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OFFICIANTS OF ŚRAUTA RITUALS

The officiants of Vedic rituals are known as ṛtviks. The word ṛtvik (ṛtvij) is derived from ṛtu/yaḥ + kvin. Ṛtvik is a person who is hired on dakṣiṇā and who performs śrauta and smārta rituals.¹ According to Manu, ṛtvik is a person who, having been selected, performs rites such as Agnyādhāna, Pākayajña, Agnistoma etc.² Ṛtviks are also referred to as messengers of the gods.³ Generally, the word ṛtvik is translated as 'priest', who is regarded both an agent of the yajamāna and a delegate of the gods, on the earth.⁴ He is a performer of śrauta rituals on behalf of the sponsor.

(I) Number of Ṛtviks:- The presence of a large number of ṛtviks was inevitable in the lengthy and complicated śrauta-rituals, because it was impossible for a yajamāna to perform them singly. Ṛgveda, the oldest literary monument of the world, provides a list of seven ṛtviks viz. Hotā, Potā, Nestā, Agnidhra, Prasāstā, Adhvaryu and Brahmā.⁵ The name of Udgātā is referred to in the Ṛgveda II.43.2.

Ordinarily, the śrauta rituals show that Hotā, Adhvaryu, Udgātā and Brahmā are the four chief-ṛtviks. But, the bigger rituals show that generally the number of ṛtviks participating in them is sixteen who are classified in four main groups viz. i) Adhvaryu and his three assistants viz. Pratiprasthātā, Nestā and Unnetā; ii) Brahmā and his three assistants viz. Brāhmaṇaccheṃsī, Agnidhra and Potā, iii) Hotā and his three assistants viz. Maitravaruṇa⁶ (Prasāstā), Acchāvāka and Grāvastut; and iv) Udgātā and his three assistants viz. Prastotā, Pratiharttā and Subrahmanya.⁷ But the rituals themselves show that the number of ṛtviks participating in various rituals did not remain restricted to any definite

number. It varied from sacrifice to sacrifice as it is clear from the following account:

<u>Name of the sacrifice</u>	<u>Number of the Rtviks</u>
<u>(a) Haviryañña-Samsthā</u>	
Agnihotra	1 (Adhvaryu) ⁸
Darśapūrṇamāsa	4 (Brahmā, Hotā, Adhvaryu and Agnidhra) ⁹
Dākṣāyaṇa	4 (as above) ¹⁰
Agnyādhāna	4 (as above) ¹¹
Cāturmāsya	5 (Pratiprasthātā is added as the fifth) ¹²
Paśubandha	6 (Maitrāvaruṇa is added as the sixth) ¹³
Sautrāmanī	6 (as above) ¹⁴
<u>(b) Soma Samsthā:</u>	
Soma sacrifice (in general)	16 (Four principal groups consisting of sixteen rtviks as discussed earlier. But, Baudh.ŚS.II.3 adds Sadasya and his three assistants viz. Abhigara, Dhruvagopa, and Samśrāva, thus making a total number twenty.)
Agnistoma	12 ¹⁵
Atyagnistoma	13 ¹⁵
Ukthya	15 ¹⁵
Sodasin	16 ¹⁵
Vājapeya	17 ¹⁵
Atirātra	29 ¹⁵
Apitoryāma	33 ¹⁵
Sattras	Absence of the rtviks.

Obviously, the Śrauta rituals show a considerable number of ṛtviks, 'a crowd of ṛtviks conducting a vast and complicated rituals.¹⁶ The employment of a large number of ṛtviks in the Śrauta rituals signifies that these rituals were performed for ^{the} advantage of some rich person, king or wealthy commoner. The attachment of these ṛtviks to the rituals also bears out the fact that they enjoyed an important place and played a very significant part in the performance of the Śrauta-rituals.

(II) Qualities of the Ṛtviks:- The proper conduct of rituals demanded ^{an} the assistance of expert ṛtviks who knew the proper invocation and could recite the hymns of praise and prayer for the deities. As a matter of fact, the ritual of reciting verses could be performed by anybody, but the Śrauta rituals demanded recitation with proper accents. And the ṛtviks were supposed to be well-versed in it. For the accurate performance of Śrauta rituals the presence of qualified ṛtviks was as much essential as the sound and complete limbs for the proper functioning of the human-body.

The ritual of making a yajamāna get the 'asīrvāda' is performed by ṛtviks,¹⁷ and it is possible and looks nice only if they have attained a grown up age. The age for admission to the office of the ṛtvik is nowhere explicitly mentioned, yet it seems that the minimum age for a ṛtvik was twenty.¹⁸ No body below the age of twenty, how much intelligent he might be, could be appointed as ṛtvik. There were several significant factors deciding the qualities which a ṛtvik was supposed to possess.

(a) Varna: The ritualistic-texts categorically point out the brāhmaṇa varṇa as eligible for the appointment of ṛtviks in śrauta rituals.¹⁹ However, it does not follow that all brāhmaṇas were

rtviks. The rituals required knowledge of ritual-performances and those who were not expert in it were not appointed as rtviks. Only a qualified brāhmaṇa could be appointed to this rank.

In the modern days a person belonging to any varṇa is free to join any service or office, but the śrauta rituals make it obvious that the vedic-society was strictly divided into four main varṇas and each varṇa had to do its own duties and among them it were only the brāhmaṇas who were entitled to officiate as rtvik. Thus, 'Varṇa' was an important factor determining the quality of a rtvik.

(b) Physique:- The complicated śrauta-rituals were not of the nature that they could be performed by sitting on a single place only. The rituals required the bodily movements in various manners. This is why the rtviks were supposed to be young, able to recite verses loudly and with complete limbs,²⁰ which means that good physique was another quality to be considered as essential for the selection of a rtvik. At the same time, it would not be out of way to point out here that rtviks were tall²¹ and were neither very black nor very white.²² The reason might be this that in Vedic society people were possibly in practice to select bridegrooms for their daughters from amongst the officiating young rtviks. Instances in this respect are found in the Vedic texts. Bṛhaddevatā V.50-81 narrates a story in which it has been told that Arcanānas, along with his son Śyāvāśva, performed a yajña of the King Rathavīti, and the latter married his daughter to Śyāvāśva. Īśvalāyana Gṛhya Sūtra also endorses the fact when it says that the father may give away his daughter to rtvik while a sacrifice with the three śrauta fires is going on.²³ Manu(III.28) calls this type of marriage 'Daiva-vivāha'.

Now-a-days, physically handicapped persons are also employed in services, only on compassionate ground, but the Śrauta-rituals always required ṛtviks with proper limbs because physically handicapped could not be able to perform them with convenience and in a right way.

(c) Intellect:- The ṛtviks used to be well versed in the Vedas. Apart from the knowledge of the Vedas, the rituals, in which varied sacrificial materials were used, required working knowledge of using them. And Adhvaryu had to possess such knowledge.²³ The ritual of reciting yājyā and anuvākya also required intellectual quality, and it were only the Hotās who knew both the proper pronunciation and the meaning of the hymns, the order of employment of which was taught in the brāhmaṇas of Bahvarc̣as.²⁴ The ritual of chanting the sāmans from Sāmaveda and the verses from Yajurveda required the intellect of Udgātā and Adhvaryu, respectively, whereas the ritual of reciting verses from any of the four Vedas depends upon the intellect of Brahman.²⁵ The ṛtviks were supposed to have an aptitude to perform the rituals otherwise the yajamāna would not be able to get the fruit coming out of their performance.²⁶

(d) Heredity:- The ritualistic-texts show that the people belonging to Bṛghu-gotra were well-versed in the duties of a Hotā. In the Dasapeya and Abhiṣecaniya rituals Hotā used to belong to the Bṛghu-gotra.²⁷ At the rituals of Itapeya-ekāha, Brahman belonged to the yajamāna's gotra,²⁸ whereas at the Jyotiṣṭoma he belongs to the Vasistha gotra.²⁹ It was necessary for ṛtviks that they belonged to good descents.³⁰ It seems that certain gotras were considered to be expert in the performance of certain rituals. The ṛtviks belonging to Vasistha, Bhārgava, Angirasa and Vyāsa gotras were

regarded as the respectable rtviks.³¹

Generally, in the modern society and especially in the villages of northern India people acquire the services of their traditional rtviks. But, there are tribes where such practice is not in vogue. For example, in the religious ceremonies of the Garos tribe, the office of the rtvik is not hereditary as in other Assamese tribes. The person, who qualifies for the job and has an ability to recite mantras, can become a rtvik.³² In the Vedic society it was, perhaps, thought that the person belonging to intellectual ancestors would also be an intellectual. The Śrauta rituals show that a yajamāna must satisfy himself before selecting a rtvik, whether the person, candidate for the office of rtvik, possessed certain qualities or not. To become a rtvik in the vedic society was not an easy task, for, there was a competition and hard test therefor.

(III) SELECTION OF RTVIKS:- For the proper performance of the Śrauta rituals the yajamāna used to seek the help of rtviks. They were regarded worthy of a respectable reception.³³ The śrauta rituals show that they were selected by yajamāna, but question arises whether they were also ready and happy to be selected? Rgveda provides an answer in this respect that they appeared to be very glad at the very thought that they could render their services as rtviks in the sacrifice.³⁴ They considered the sacrifice as almost an aim of their life. However, in the Brāhmanic period somewhat changed tendency is met with. ŚBr. prescribes that one should not agree to be appointed as a rtvik in a sacrifice where less than one hundred cows would be given as daksina.³⁵ But, it should not mean that rtviks were becoming totally money-

mindful or were greedy. It was prescribed, perhaps, with the reason that the office of rtvik might not become a cheaper one. Obviously, Śrauta rituals were out of the reach of a poor man.

There is a slight difference of views about the sequence of their selection. Āśvalāyana provides the sequence as: Hotā, Adhvaryu, Brahmā and Udgātā with their respective assistants.³⁶ Some ācāryas prescribe the selection of Brahmā to be made first of all. For example, for the rituals of Agnyādhāna the rtviks are selected in the following sequence: Brahmā, Hotā, Adhvaryu and Āgnīdhra.³⁷ Thus, Brahmā is selected first of all in case four rtviks are to be selected and if sixteen are to be selected the sequence would be: Hotā, Brahmā, Adhvaryu and Udgātā.³⁸

(a) Selection of four or all?:- At the Agnistoma all the sixteen rtviks are selected one by one.³⁹ But, Kātyāyana says that only four chiefs may be chosen and from their selection others are understood to have been selected.⁴⁰ Śāṅś is also of the same opinion.⁴¹ Thus, option in the ritual of selection was given to save the time.

(b) Verses of Selection:- At the soma sacrifice Adhvaryu is selected with 'ādityo Adhvaryuḥ' etc., Brahmā with 'candramā Brahmā' etc., Hotā with 'āgnīḥ Hotā' etc. Udgātā with 'Parjanya Udgātā' etc. and their assistants are selected with 'diśo hotrāśamsins' etc.⁴² The verses show that the selection of rtviks is symbolical because the yajamāna selects the gods in the form of rtviks. When Hotā is selected his name is spoken in a whispering or in a high tone.⁴³ Hotā, in the form of fire-god is selected by reciting 'agnirdeva' etc.⁴⁴ At the Darśapūrnāmāsa, Brahmā is selected with 'bhūpate bhuvanapate' etc.⁴⁵ The ritual of reciting this verse

shows that Brahmā was regarded the master of all beings. After their selection, each of them was provided with madhuparka,⁴⁶ a silver pot, a mat and lower and upper garments.⁴⁷ After their selection they also used to undergo the ritual of dīkṣā.

From the examination of the selection of ṛtviks it appears that there were many candidates aspiring for the post of ṛtvik. They were selected purely on the merit basis. From the qualities required, it is clear that the yajamāna had to choose his ṛtviks from amongst a large number of candidates. The term 'Varaṇa', meaning selection, bears this fact out. But, later on 'varaṇa' became merely a ritual. The yajamāna might be knowing already the persons to whom he had to choose and thus the ritual of 'ṛtvik-varaṇa' remained only a formal ritual.

(IV) FUNCTIONS OF THE RTVIKS:- In the early Vedic period the sacrificial rituals were performed by the head of the family, but with the expansion of rituals the office of ṛtvik became a public one and the rituals began to be performed on behalf of its individual institutor (the yajamāna). The ṛtviks performed innumerable rituals on his behalf. This is why Monier-Williams looks upon the whole life of a Hindu as the lawful property of these ṛtviks.⁴⁸ The functions of ṛtviks were the essential part of Śrauta rituals. Only those rituals were performed by them which were prescribed for each of them. They had to perform quite a large number of rituals and due to this very reason Keith treats them as restless personages.⁴⁹ Here follows the detailed description of rituals to be performed by the ṛtviks individually.

(A) (Adhvaryu and his Assistants)

(i) Adhvaryu:- The rituals of initiation of the yajamāna are performed by Adhvaryu, but at the Darśapūrṇamāsa he girds a muñja cord

over the clothes of the yajamāna's wife also.⁵⁰ After the rituals of initiation he declares the yajamāna initiated.⁵¹ Secondly, rituals pertaining to manual work are also performed by Adhvaryu. For instance, before or after sun-rise, he churns out the fire for Agnyādhāna.⁵² He milks for the preparation of Sānnāyya⁵³ and cooks anvāhārya.⁵⁴ In the Varuṇapraghāsa parva, he prepares the effigy of ram.⁵⁵ At the Sautrāmanī, the ritual of purifying Surā is also performed by him.⁵⁶ At the Agnistoma, the ritual of measuring the 'mahāvedi' is also his manual work.⁵⁷ He performs so many other manual works. During Itṛmedha, he ploughs the burial place.⁵⁸ At the Vajapeya, he prepares a 'ku-dvāra' through which Surā grahas are taken.⁵⁹ Thirdly, the ritual of offering the libation is also the function of Adhvaryu.⁶⁰ Fourthly, the function of giving Prāisa to the other ṛtviks also belongs to him. At the Animal sacrifice he says to Hotā, "We (the ṛtviks) anoint the yūra, (you) repeat the required mantras!"⁶¹ Fifthly, he himself recites mantras while performing the ritual. Sometimes he recites mantras in a very low voice (upāṁsu). Sixthly, he officiates as an instructor also. At the Isvamedha, he gives various instructions to the guards of the horse.⁶² Obviously, the rituals of varied types were performed by Adhvaryu.

Keeping his manual work in view, Max Muller gives him the lowest place among the ṛtviks,⁶³ which is not correct because the excess of physically performance of ritual and recitation of less verses do not degrade his position.⁶⁴ Eggeling is of the same view. According to him, the office of this ṛtvik seems to have risen in the general estimation with the increasing importance that was attributed to the endless details of the ceremonial.⁶⁵ Hence, the functions of Adhvaryu put him at a higher status.

(ii) Pratiprasthātā:- He is the first assistant to Adhvaryu and follows him in performance of the rituals. At the Sautrāmanī both of them purify the yajamāna⁶⁶. Secondly, if Adhvaryu is busy in some other ritual then Pratiprasthātā substitutes him. For example, at the Pravargya he could place the utensils of gharma⁶⁷. Thirdly certain rituals are performed by Adhvaryu and Pratiprasthātā at the same time. Rituals related to Payas and surā grahas, respectively are performed simultaneously by Adhvaryu and Pratiprasthātā⁶⁸. Fourthly, rituals pertaining to manual works are also performed by him. He prepares the effigy of a sheep,⁶⁹ Karambha pots,⁷⁰ a khara,⁷¹ the Savanīya purodāśa etc.⁷² He cuts the entrails of the victim animal.⁷³ Fifthly, the rituals related to yajamāna's wife are also performed by him. He brings her forward.⁷⁴ The rituals of initiation upon her are performed by him.⁷⁵ Sixthly, he orders other rtviks also. At the Śatātirātra, he asks Maitrāvaruṇa to recite the morning recitation, prātamanuvāka,⁷⁶ but he himself performs rituals without reciting mantras.

(iii) Nestā:- He is the second assistant to Adhvaryu. He also performs rituals pertaining to yajamāna's wife. At the soma sacrifices he brings her forward.⁷⁷ The rituals of sura are performed by him. He himself prepares surā⁷⁸ and with a 'Pavitra' made of the hair of cow and horse, he purifies it.⁷⁹ The ritual of preparing surā is the manual work of Nestā.

(iv) Unnetā:- The last, but not least, assistant to Adhvaryu is Unnetā who is mainly related to the rituals of soma pressing.⁸⁰ He alone can perform the ritual of drawing the soma by virtue of his designation (samākhyāna).⁸¹

(B) (Brahmā and his Assistants)

(i) Brahmā:- The main function of Brahmā is to judge the mistakes committed in Śranta rituals.⁸² He is also regarded as a rtvik of a special duty.⁸³ He is an embodiment of the sacrificial art and vedic lore in general.⁸⁴ He gives his consent to begin the rituals.⁸⁵ He gives permission to Adhvaryu to sprinkle the mahāvira-pot.⁸⁶ At the Sautrāmanī, when Adhvaryu purifies the milk, Brahmā looks at the milk,⁸⁷ which shows that he also functions as the eye-witness of the rituals. The ritual of singing sāmans is also performed by him. At the time of chariot-race of Vājapeya he sings three sāmans.⁸⁸ At the Agnyādhāna, he sings Rathantara and Vāmadevya sāmans.⁸⁹ The rituals related to the yajamāna are also performed by him. For example, at the Rājasūya consecration, he is one of the sprinklers.⁹⁰

(ii) Brāhmanācchanī :- He is an assistant to Brahmā, and recites for Indra-Sūrya in the morning pressing of Soma sacrifice.⁹¹ His main role is only in the soma sacrifices.

(iii) Āgnīdhra:- One of the main duties of Āgnīdhra is to kindle the fire.⁹² He performs manual work also. He sweeps the grounds of Veda and prepares an utkarā.⁹³ Arrangement of Kapālas is also done by him.⁹⁴ He husks the havis grains thrice.⁹⁵ He bakes Puro-dāsa for Agni-soma.⁹⁶ At the Pasubandha he digs a pit for erecting the yūpa and takes the victim animal to the slaughtering place.⁹⁷

(iv) Potā :- He is the third and last assistant to Brahmā. At the soma rituals he is regarded as a mere shadow, of no consequence or importance, whose former importance may be judged from his name and his obvious connection with soma-pavamāna.⁹⁸ He recites yājyā at the morning pressing.⁹⁹

(C) (Hotā and his Assistants)

- (i) Hotā :- He is the specialist of Rgveda. Śāṅ.ŚS. lays a general rule that he should perform what is not assigned to any of his assistants.¹⁰⁰ His special function is to recite the stanzas (Śast-ras) from Rgveda. He recites anuvākya and yājyās, whenever he is directed to do so.¹⁰¹ At the Darśapūrṇamāsa he performs Saṁsthā-japa.¹⁰² Directed by the Maitrāvaruṇa, he recites the offering ver-ses.¹⁰³ At the Aśvamedha, the recitation of 'Pāriplava-Gāthā' by him¹⁰⁴ shows his expertness in telling the stories. The rituals pertaining to yajamāna's wife are also performed by him. At the Darśapūrṇamāsa he ungirds her yoktra and unties the Veda.¹⁰⁵
- (ii) Maitrāvaruṇa:- He is also known as Prastotā,¹⁰⁶ and is regarded as the mind of sacrifice.¹⁰⁷ During morning-pressing he recites for Mitra and Varuṇa.¹⁰⁸ At the Sautrāmanī he is asked to recite for the cups of surā and soma.¹⁰⁹ He also gives instructions known as 'praiṣa'.
- (iii) Acchāvāka:- He is second assistant to Hotā. In the Soma sacrifice he also shares the soma drinking. He recites third ājyasastra.¹¹⁰ In the morning pressing he recites for Indra-Agni.¹¹¹
- (iv) Grāvastut:- He is the third assistant to Hotā and during soma pressing he recites the verse in praise of the pressing stones and in this way he justifies his name. In the midday-pressing he starts reciting grāvastotriya without any summons.¹¹² He also takes his share in soma drinks.¹¹³

(D) (Udgātā and his Assistants)

- (i) Udgātā:- Udgātā recites verses in praise of the gods in different ways. He chants the hymns of sāmaveda (stotras), there-fore he is regarded as the chief-chanter. At the Sautrāmanī, he

is asked by Adhvaryu to chant a sāman in brhati-metre.¹¹⁴ He also recites verses from Yajurveda. For example, at the Agnicayana he places ukhā in a sikya reciting 'deva agnim' etc.¹¹⁵

(ii) Prastotā :- He also chants sāmans. He is the second chanter who chants 'Prastāva'.¹¹⁶ At the Āsvamedha, after the killing of the horse he chants solo a laud to Yama.¹¹⁷

(iii) Pratihartā :- He is the second assistant to Udgātā. He is the third chanter who chants the 'Pratihāra'.¹¹⁸

(iv) Subrahmanya :- The functions of Subrahmanya are not of much importance.¹¹⁹ He is so called because he recites a particular litany viz. Subrahmanya¹²⁰ which is his special duty. At the Agnistoma, he drives the oxen yoked to the cart on which Soma is brought.¹²¹

The function of sixteen ṛtviks in the soma sacrifice, along with their share of soma juice can be summed up in the following table.¹²²

	(Initiation) The Adhvaryu Class of YV.	(Superintendent) The Brahmā class of A.V.	The Udgātr Class (Chanters) of S.V.	The Hotā- class (recites) of the RV.
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The full share holders	Adhvaryu	Brahmā	Udgātā	Hotā
The half share holders	Pratiprasthātā	Brāhmanācchamsī	Prastotā	Maitrāvaruṇa
The one third shareholders	Nestā	Agnīdhra	Pratihartā	Acchāvāka
The one fourth share holders	Unnetā	Potā	Subrahmanya	Grāvastut
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(E) FUNCTIONS OF ṚTVIKS ALONG WITH THE YAJAMĀNA AND HIS WIFE

Sometimes the ṛtviks and the yajamāna and his wife perform some of the rituals together. In such rituals the presence of both the ṛtvik and yajamāna is essential. The ritual of selecting the ṛtviks is always performed by yajamāna.¹²³ In the soma

purchasing rituals Pratiprasthātā, Brāhmaṇācchamsī, Adhvaryu, yajamāna, his wife and Brahmā participate. Performance of different rituals, dialogues between Adhvaryu and soma seller, giving gold to the soma seller and then forcibly taking back and beating him, optionally, on his back with a bamboo stick, - all these rituals were performed by the above stated persons together. The performance of these rituals was carried on a way as if a drama was being played. There was a ritual in which the ṛtviks and the yajamāna used to touch ghee together and to take a pledge which aimed at not to harm each other.¹²⁴ Clearly, the ṛtviks, if desired, could entirely ruin the yajamāna by committing some mistakes in the performance of rituals but in general such practices were avoided.

(F) FUNCTIONS OF ṚTVIKS AS SUBSTITUTES:-

The functions of the ṛtviks are restricted on the basis of particular title given to particular ṛtvik.¹²⁵ In exceptional cases the functions of one ṛtvik fall under the scope of the other ṛtvik's functions. For example, at the Kuṇḍapāyinām-ayana five ṛtviks take part and each of them performs duties of three ṛtviks at a time viz. Hotā performs the duties of Hotā, Adhvaryu and Potā; Udgātā performs the duties of Udgātā, Neṣṭā and Acchāvāka; Maitrāvaruṇa performs the duties of Maitrāvaruṇa, Brahmā and Pratihartā, Prastotā performs the duties of Prastotā, Brāhmaṇācchamsī and Grāvastut; and Pratihartā performs the duties of Pratihartā, Āgnīdhra and Unnetā.¹²⁶

Modern scholars compare the functions of ṛtviks with those of modern Ministers and the duties of Brahmā with those of the President of a modern council.¹²⁷ In this way, Adhvaryu can be stated as the modern 'Prime-Minister'.

(V) ADHVARYU AS THE MAIN PERFORMER OF THE RITUALS:

As a matter of fact, Śrauta rituals were performed with the help of ṛtviks. But, most of the rituals were performed by Adhvaryu. The manual work in the rituals, viz. to measure and prepare the Vēdī, making the yajña pots, bringing water, baking puroḍāśa etc. were performed by him. He himself cooks brahmaudana.¹²⁸ Cutting a palāśa or Samī branch, at the Darśeṣṭī, was performed by him.¹²⁹ Generally, barber (nāpita) shaved the hair etc. but in Cāturmāsyaś, it was the Adhvaryu himself who shaved the yajamāna.¹³⁰ The rituals pertaining to yajamāna's wife were also performed by him if she was absent.¹³¹

The rituals of reciting verses, chanting sāmans etc. were performed at his instance. Sāyana has very clearly accepted the supremacy of Yajurveda because it is helpful in performing the rituals.¹³² Since Adhvaryu was related to this Veda, hence his supremacy over the ritual. Most of the rituals were performed by him.¹³³ He is admitted as the chief ṛtvik in Rgvedic and later ritual.¹³⁴ In certain rites he was the sole ṛtvik. For example, at Agnihotrā¹³⁵ and Pindapitryajña¹³⁶ he was the only ṛtvik selected for the purpose of performing the rites.

Buitenen is of the view that Adhvaryu was the actual sacrificer in the Prāvargya as he also seems to be one who underwent the special consecration.¹³⁷ Adhvaryu was the performer, the leader and desirous of sacrifice.¹³⁸ He was the central figure in the Śrauta rituals.

CONCLUSION:- The Śrauta rituals were mainly performed by the ṛtviks. But, as the ṛtviks started to be underrated in the age of Āraṇyakas and Upanishads, the ṛtviks were also affected with it and they started to loose their esteem.¹³⁹ However, the Śrauta

rituals show that a large number of *rtviks*, who were well qualified from various aspects and sincere towards their difficult functions, were employed for the accurate and fruitful performance of the former, which further makes it obvious that ritualism had dominated the Vedic society in general and *sūtra* period in particular. The *rtviks* were the important personalities in the ritual performances, who performed their duties with sincerity and devotion for the betterment of the *yajamānas*.

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१. वृत्विक्- यौ दक्षिणादिना परिहृतः श्रौतस्मात्तदो नि कर्माणि करोति।
'Vivrti' comm. on Pār.Gr.Sū.I.3.1;
२. अग्न्याधेयं पाकयज्ञानग्निष्टोमादिकान्परवान् । ऋग्वेद २२.२३.
यः करोति वृत्तौ यस्य स तस्यवृत्विगिहोच्यते । Manu. 2. 143.
३. देवदूता वा एते यद्वृत्विजौ । TS.I.7.3.2.
४. Chamber's Encyclopaedia, Vol.8, p.402.
५. त्वाग्ने होत्रं तव पौत्रवृत्तियं तव नेष्टुं त्वमग्निदृतायतः । तव प्रशास्त्रं त्वम-
प्यरोयसि ब्रूता वासि गृहपतिश्च नो दमे । RV.II.1.2.
६. Eggerling (SBR, Vol. XLIV, Intro.p.xxii) observes that Mitra and Varuṇa play an important part in sacrificial rituals that is why one of the priests is named after them as Maitravaruṇa.
७. Vidyādhara, KŚS.Bhūmika, p.42, cf. ASV.ŚS.4.1.6, KpŚS.10.1.9, BauhŚS.II.3.
८. Bauh.ŚS.II.3; VkhŚS.II.1, Gautama Dh.Sū.2.2.18.
९. Bauh ŚS.II.3, ManŚS.1.1.1.9, Vkh.ŚS.IV.1. Gautama Dh.Sū. 2.2.18.
१०. ŚBr. 2.4.4.25.
११. Vt.ŚS.II.1(5).5 & Comm.
१२. Bauh.ŚS.II.3, KpŚS.8.5.15, VkhŚS.8.3.
१३. Bauh.ŚS.II.3, 10.1, KpŚS.7.14.4, Kāṇe, P.V., H. DhŚā, Vol.II, pt.ii, p.1109.
१४. KŚS.19.3.13-14, ŚBr.12.8.2.26-27.
१५. द्वादशाग्निष्टोमे त्रयोदशात्यग्निष्टोमे पञ्चदशोक्थ्ये षोडश षोडशिनि सप्तदश
वाजपेय एकोनविंशतमतिरात्रे त्रयस्त्रिंशतमुप्तौयामि । Hir.ŚS.10.8.25.
१६. Cf. Macdonell, A. A.: A History of Sanskrit Literature, p.154.
१७. वृत्विजो यजमानायाशिषमाशासते । ŚBr.3.5.2.9.
१८. Chamber's Encyclopaedia, Vol.8, pp.402-3.
१९. ब्राह्मणानामावृत्विज्यम् । KpŚS.24.1.21; Cf. Jaimini 12.4.34;
Bauh ŚS.II.3, Kp.yajñaparibhāṣā Sūtre, 24.
२०. सोमेन यजमानो ब्राह्मणानाथेयानवृत्विजो वृणीते यूः स्थविरान्वानुचानानु-
ध्ववाचोऽनगहोनान् । KpŚS.10.1.1, Cf. BhārŚS.10.1.1, Śān.ŚS. 5.1.1., ASV. Gr.Sū.I.23.2.

२१. ऋत्विजो वृणीते महतो ---। Man.ŚS.2.1.1.4.
२२. ऋत्विगावै योऽनूचानः --- नातिकृष्णोऽनतिश्वेतः । Lāt.ŚS.1.1.7.
२३. Āśv. Gr. Sū. I. 6. 1.
२४. Cf. ŚBr. 11. 4. 2. 20.
२५. Cf. Max Müller: A History of Ancient Sanskrit Lit. p. 433.
२६. ĀpŚS. 24. 1. 17-19, ŚBr. 11. 5. 8. 4, GBr. II. 24(PB), Nir. I. 8, Āp. yajñaparibhāṣā Sūtra, 20-22.
२७. यत् वे योऽकुशलाः ऋत्विजो भवन्त्यपरिणिता ब्रह्मचर्यमपराग्याः वा तदे यस्य विरिष्टमित्याचक्षते । GBr. I. 13(PB).
२८. KŚS. 15. 4. 1, ĀpŚS. 18. 20. 21, Man.ŚS. 9. 1. 1. 2, Varāha ŚS. 3. 3. 1. 59, Nir.ŚS. 13. 7. 10.
२९. Vidyā. on KŚS. 22. 8. 20.
३०. वासिष्ठो ब्रह्मा ज्योतिष्टोमे । Nir.ŚS. 10. 8. 23.
३१. Nir.ŚS. 10. 1. 1.
३२. वासिष्ठमार्गवांगिरसायास्या महर्त्विजः क्रमशो भवन्ति । VkhŚS. 12. 1
३३. Bahadur, K.P.: Caste, Tribe and Culture of India: Assam, Vol. I, P. 102.
३४. षडध्या भवन्त्याचार्य ऋत्विक् स्वशुभो राजा स्नातकः प्रिय इति । ŚānŚS. 4. 21. 1, Cf. Pār. Gr. Sū. I. 3. 1.
३५. Cf. RV. 7. 60. 12, Cf. RV. 6. 53. 2.
३६. न ह्येवमसत्कृति णेन यजमानस्य ऋत्विक् स्यात् । ŚBr. 4. 3. 4. 3.
३७. Āśv. ŚS. 4. 1. 6.
३८. --- तत्र मे त्वं ब्रह्मा भव, होता भव, अध्वर्युर्भव, अग्नीध्रमवेति वृत्वा तान्ध्यर्च्य सुप्रोक्षितादि । Devayājñika Paddhati on KŚS. 4. 7.
३९. होतारमेव प्रथमं वृणीते । Āśv. Gr. Sū. I. 23. 6.
४०. ब्राह्मणानावै यानृत्विजः षोडशैकशो वृणीते । Nir.ŚS. 10. 1. 1.
४१. KŚS. 7. 1. 8 प्रथमं पुरुषवरणेन च तेषां वृत्ता एव भवन्ति । Karka on KŚS. 7. 1. 8.
४२. चतुरः सन्त्वा । Śān. ŚS. 5. 1. 2.
४३. Man ŚS. 2. 1. 1. 4.
४४. VkhŚS. 6. 5., KŚS. 3. 2. 14,
४५. KŚS. 3. 2. 7, ŚBr. 1. 5. 1. 5, 9.

४५. KSS. 2.1.17, Cf. TBr. 3.7.6.1, ĀpSS. 3.18.2; Vt. SS. 1.1.17, BaudhSS. 3.23; VarāhaSS. I.1.5.1.
४६. ततो मधुपर्कण समन्त्रं सर्वेषां समर्चनम् । Agnistoma Paddhati, p.9, Cf. ASV. Gr. Sū. I. 24.1.
४७. Kashikar, C.G.: The Śrauta Ritual and Vājapeya Sacrifice, p. 22.
४८. Monier-Williams: Religious Thought and Life in India, p. 352.
४९. Keith, A. B.: RPV, Vol. I, p. 252.
५०. ĀpSS. II.5.2; KSS. 2.7.1.; BaudhSS. I.12, ŚBr. 1.3.1.15.
५१. MānSS. 2.1.2.23.
५२. KSS. 4.8.19, ŚBr. 2.1.4.8 (Sa ya udita āhavanīyam manthet) accepts only the latter view.
५३. KSS. 4.4.7.
५४. ĀpSS. 3.3.12.
५५. Bhār. SS. 8.7.4.
५६. KSS. 19.2.9
५७. KSS. 8.3.6.
५८. KSS. 21.4.1.
५९. KSS. 14.1.19.
६०. KSS. 15.6.23.
६१. KSS. 6.3.1.
६२. KSS. 20.2.11-17.
६३. "They formed, as would seem, the lowest class of priests, and their acquirements were more of a practical than an intellectual character - The number of hymns and invocations which they had to use at the sacrifices was smaller than that of the other priests" - Max Muller: The History of Ancient Sanskrit Literature, p. 471.
६४. Ch. Chaubey, B. B.: Vedic Vālmaya: Eka Anusilana, p. 103.
६५. Eggeling, J: SBE, Vol. XII, Intro. p. 25.
६६. ŚBr. 12.7.3.22.
६७. KSS. 26.2.37.
६८. ĀpSS. 19.7.2.
६९. ĀpSS. 8.5.43.

७०. Varāha ŚS. 1.7.2.18, Cf. Mān. ŚS. 1.7.4.1.
७१. Mān. ŚS. 7.1.1.5.
७२. Ap ŚS. 12.3.15.
७३. Ap ŚS. 7.18.1.
७४. KŚS. 6.5.26.
७५. KŚS. 7.2.18-19. Vkh. ŚS. 12.7.
७६. KŚS. 24.4.36,
७७. --- नेष्टरिति सोमे । KŚS. 6.5.26.
७८. KŚS. 14.1.17.
७९. KŚS. 14.1.27
८०. KŚS. 9.4.1.
८१. उन्नेतोन्नयति समाख्यानात् । KŚS. 19.5.30.
८२. Cf. Haug; Eng. Tr. ABr. Vol. I, Intro. P. 20.
८३. Cf. Gonda, J. Notes on Brāhmaṇa, p. 6.
८४. Cf. Eggeling, SBE, Vol. XII, Intro. PP. 20-21,
८५. Śān. ŚS. 4.6.17., Ap ŚS. 3.19.1. / (Adhvaryu): ब्रम् अपः प्रणयामि । Brahmanā: V
 अपः प्रणय) Vidyā. on KŚS. 3.5.5. (कं प्रतिष्ठ इति वृष्णाऽनुज्ञातो--).।
८६. KŚS. 26.2.26.
८७. KŚS. 19.2.13.
८८. KŚS. 14.3.12, 14.4.1, Cf. Śān ŚS. 16.17.1, Vkh ŚS. 17.13.
८९. KŚS. 4.9.6.10.
९०. Mān. ŚS. 9.1.3.21.
९१. GBr. 3.14. (UB)
९२. Suchan[#] office is known also to the B Parsi ritual, see: Haug. ABr. (Eng.) Vol. I, Intro. P. 15.
९३. KŚS. 2.6.5.
९४. KŚS. 2.4.24.
९५. Ap ŚS. 1.20.12., Cf. KŚS. 2.4.22,

६६. KŚS. 2.5.19.
६७. Vkh. ŚS. 10.7, 13.
६८. Keith, A. B.: RPV, Vol. I, p. 296,
६९. ĀpŚS. 12.24.1.
१००. ŚānŚS. 1.1.17.
१०१. ŚānŚS. 1.2.27-28.
१०२. ĀSVŚS. 1.11.15-16.
१०३. MānŚS. 5.2.8.4.
१०४. ĀpŚS. 20.6.7., Cf. KŚS. 20.2.22, ĀSV. ŚS. 10.6.10.
१०५. ŚānŚS. 1.15.9.
१०६. Cf. Vidyā. KŚS Bhūmikā, p. 42; His another name is Upavaktr.
(Cf. Sen, Chitrabhanu, Dictionary of Vedic Rituals, p. 99).
१०७. मनसो वै यत्तस्य मेजावरुणा । ABr. 2.5.
१०८. OBr. 3.13. (UB).
१०९. KŚS. 19.3.7.
११०. ĀSV. ŚS. 5.10.28.
१११. ~~GBr~~ GBr. 3.15 (UB)
११२. ĀpŚS. 13.1.5.
११३. Mīmāṃsā 3.5.27.
११४. KŚS. 19.5.1-2, पदतिः ब्रूया गायति ।
११५. KŚS. 16.5.5., VS. 12.2.
११६. ĀpŚS. 10.1.9.
११७. यामेन साम्ना प्रस्तोतानूपतिष्ठते । ĀpŚS. 20.17.11.
११८. ĀpŚS. 10.1.9.
११९. Cf. ERE; Vol. 10, p. 313.
१२०. Cf. SBr. 3.3.4.17, ĀpŚS. 10.28, 4-6.
१२१. KŚS. 7.9.12.
१२२. Cf. Banerji, B. C., Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal,
Vol. 3. No. 4, April, 1907, p. 203.

१२३. Supra, Ch.III, ref.9.
१२४. अष्टीस्तेभ्यो, न सतानूनपित्रेण दोग्धव्यमिति श्रुतेः । KSS.8.1.21.
१२५. Cf. तत्संयोगात्कर्मणां व्यवस्था स्यात्, संयोगस्यार्थवृत्तात् । BR.Ja1.3.7.40
१२६. KSS.24.4.42-46, cf. Śān.ŚS.13.24.7-13.
१२७. Cf. Vaidya, C. V.: History of Skt. Literature, Vol. I (Section II) p.46.
१२८. तेभ्योऽध्वर्युश्चातुष्टायं ब्रह्मोदनं निर्वपति । ŚBr.13.4.1.5.
१२९. KSS.2.1.2, 4.2.1,
१३०. KSS.5.2.17.
१३१. अपत्नीकः । KSS.5.8.5, आज्यावेक्षणं तु आज्यसंस्कारादध्वर्युः करोत्येव ।
Vidyā. on KSS.5.8.5.
१३२. अस्तु एवं सर्वविदाध्ययनतत्परायणब्रह्मयज्ञपादौ ऋग्वेदस्यैव प्राथम्यम् । अर्थज्ञानस्य
तु यज्ञानुष्ठानार्थत्वात् तत्र तु यजुर्वेदस्यैव प्रधानत्वात् तद्व्याख्यानमेव आदौयुक्तम् ।
Sāyana, R̥gveda Bhāṣya Bhūmika p.2.
१३३. अध्वर्युं कर्मसु, वेदयोगात् । KSS.1.8.29
इवां त्वः पौष्टमास्ते पुपुष्वान् गायत्रं त्वी गायति शक्वरीषु ।
ब्रह्मा त्वी वदति जातधियां यज्ञस्य मात्रां विमिमीत एकः ॥ RV.10.17.11.
१३४. Cf. BRE, Vol. 10, p.312.
१३५. अग्निहोत्रस्य यज्ञतूरेण इत्विग्ध्वर्युः । Vkh.ŚS.2.1.
१३६. अस्य च अध्वर्युं कर्त्ता । Paddhati on KSS.4.1.1.
१३७. Buitenen, J. A. B.: The Pravargya, p.7.
१३८. तु० अध्वर्युः अध्वर्युः । अध्वरं युजित । अध्वरस्य नेता । अध्वरं कामयते ।
Nir.1.8.
१३९. Basu, Jogiraj: India of the Age of the Brāhmanas, p.80.